

Selectmen's Visit
31 August 1998
7:30pm
Hampton Town Offices

The scheduled Selectmen's visit with the Hampton Board of Selectmen at the Hampton Offices began at approximately 7:30pm. Those present included Allen Hines, George Lagassa & Jack Steiner (Selectmen), Russell McAllister (Town Administrator), James Barrington (Hampton Town Manager) and the Hampton Board of Selectmen.

After a round of introductions by the Boards of North Hampton & Hampton Allen Hines briefed those in attendance with the purpose of the North Hampton Board of Selectmen's visit to Hampton. Mr. Hines began by characterizing the meeting as special and even historic because there have been few times, if any, where any two Elected Boards from adjoining Towns have formally got together. Mr. Hines acknowledged that the communities were linked by a long and shared history. For over a century, from 1638 to 1742 North Hampton was part of the Town of Hampton. Throughout this common history businesses in North Hampton have belonged to and participated in the Hampton Chamber of Commerce. Many of these same business owners and residents of North Hampton participate in the Hampton Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis clubs. Mr. Hines further explained that both communities were participants in the Seacoast Business Alliance and that the Town of North Hampton had prepared and was in the process of submitting an application to the Office of State Planning for an Economic Development Capacity Building Grant. The purpose of the grant was to create a revolving loan fund. The revolving loan fund will be used to help promote, retain and create small business opportunities in the Towns of Hampton, North Hampton & Hampton Falls along the Hampton Beach Area and along the Route One Corridor. One of the goals of the revolving loan fund is to expand and diversify the tax bases of the communities involved.

Mr. Hines cited a list of the natural resources shared by both Towns such as the ocean, the Winnicut and Little River Watersheds and the aquifers beneath Route One in North Hampton which provides the drinking water for a majority of the seacoast residents. Mr. Hines explained how the Town of North Hampton was working hard to preserve those natural resources within its boundaries that both communities depended upon. The efforts of the Conservation Commission to craft a plan that had garnered federal financing necessary to restore tidal flushing and mitigate flooding along the Little River Salt Marsh that bordered the two Towns was cited.

Mr. Hines talked about water availability and its quality as important to maintaining the health of the two communities and that the Town of North Hampton had applied for and received federal assistance to study the Little River Watershed. Of particular concern was the impact of land use changes over time on water quality and particularly on the recharge rates for the aquifers located beneath Route One in North Hampton. Part of the NHH Board's concern regarding the aquifer stemmed from the changing use of many commercial properties along Route One in North Hampton. For instance, former gift shops have been converted to restaurants. This simple change in use subsequently placed a greater demand upon the septic systems that were not designed for such intense commercial uses. Septic failure of commercial systems that sit atop drinking water supplies was not an option. Mr. Hines explained that it was the Board's concern that a greater number of septic systems may fail as commercial development continues along the Route One corridor. The NHH Board wanted to avoid the problem of septic failure and possible aquifer contamination by asking the Hampton Board of Selectmen to consider the NHH request to tie in to the Hampton Wastewater Treatment Facility. Mr. Hines stated that the NHH Board was not interested, nor were the residents of North Hampton interested, in installing residential sewer lines. The Board's only interest was in a sewer line running along Route One, or possibly only a section of Route One. The intention was to research and analyze the costs associated with construction of a sewer line. The chief concern of this evening's meeting was to make the Hampton Board of Selectmen and Hampton residents aware of our intentions well before we proceed to formally study the issues of infrastructure placement and economic development.

Mr. Hines stated that the Town of North Hampton was currently working to craft an economic development plan for the Route One Corridor that passes through Town. Much of the impetus for such planning

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originated from North Hampton citizen responses to the recent planning board survey that was conducted as part of the update to the Town's master plan.

The Town of North Hampton's tax base currently lacks sufficient diversity and the Board would like to expand and diversify the commercial portion of the tax base along Route One. Expanding the commercial portion of the tax base along Route One will help to preserve the rural character of the Town that a majority of residents, through their responses to the planning board survey, indicate is a very important community value they wish to see preserved. It is the Board's intention to research the appropriateness of various financing mechanisms such as Tax Increment Financing as a means to finance improvements in our public infrastructure along the Route One Corridor.

The NHH Board realizes that commercial growth along Route One will proceed and that it will be beneficial to both our communities. The NHH Board is concerned about the shared supply of drinking water and the health of the aquifers located beneath Route One in North Hampton.

The members of the Hampton Board expressed their views and concerns in turn. The consensus from the Hampton Board centered on the necessity of ensuring adequate wastewater treatment capacity for Hampton residents. Mr. Lagassa pointed out that as a matter of efficiency it may actually make better fiscal sense to have North Hampton as a paying customer. Revenues from NHH could then be used to cover the costs of extending sewer services to other parts of Hampton. Future system capacity would then be easier to add from a fiscal perspective because of the additional revenue stream NHH represented.

The discussion ended at approximately 8:25pm with both Boards acknowledging the importance of the issues discussed and agreeing to further explore the issue again.

Respectfully,

Russell McAllister
Town Administrator